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The Deterrent Power of Presence: Being Seen as a Non-Violent Shield Against Harm

Abstract

Abstract: This article explores the **deterrent power of presence** – the idea that the mere act of being seen can serve as a non-violent shield against harm. Grounded in social philosophy, psychology, and behavioral ethics, we examine how visibility and observation influence human behavior and safety. Global data reveal alarmingly pervasive levels of violence in private and public life, highlighting an urgent need for preventive strategies. Drawing on theories from **Albert Bandura** (social learning, vicarious deterrence) and **Philip Zimbardo** (deindividuation, anonymity), as well as ethical insights from **Friedrich Nietzsche** and **Emmanuel Levinas**, we analyze the mechanisms by which presence exerts its influence. International statistics – including ILO's 2022 survey on workplace harassment, the EU's 2024 report on gender-based violence, UNICEF's 2022 data on violence against children, and UN Women's 2023 femicide figures – provide empirical grounding for the discussion. We present a conceptual framework defining "presence" in three dimensions: **Existence, Relation, and Legacy**. Through case studies (the Sarah Everard murder in the UK, the Mayu Tomita stabbing in Japan, and the Christchurch massacre in New Zealand), we illustrate both the effective power of presence and its stark limitations in deterring irrational or ideologically driven violence. The article is structured into sections covering the theoretical framework, practical mechanisms of visibility-based deterrence, empirical case analyses, and the ethical architecture of "presence" as a form of power. We conclude with a discussion on how conscious visibility can foster safer societies, while acknowledging the moral complexities of surveillance and the need for deeper cultural change alongside mere observation.

(No author or institutional affiliation is provided, in accordance with SSRN formatting conventions.)

Introduction

Violence and aggression remain **devastatingly pervasive** in human society despite advances in law, education, and technology. Worldwide, about **one in three women** (approximately 736 million) have been subjected to physical or sexual violence in their lifetime [1]. In the European Union, a recent large-scale survey found that **a third of women have experienced violence** – whether at home, at work, or in public – since age 18 [2]. Similarly, children are far from immune: according to UNICEF, **every 4 minutes a child is killed by an act of violence**, and about **90 million children** alive today have suffered some form of sexual violence [3]. Yet much of this violence remains shrouded in silence and secrecy. Even in developed regions like the EU, such abuse often **"remains invisible"** – only **one in every four women** ever reports violent incidents to authorities [4], and just **1 in 8** victims contacts the police [5]. The result is a vast shadow pandemic of unreported harm, thriving behind closed doors and in the absence of witnesses.

Amid this troubling landscape, the simple act of **being seen** emerges as a powerful, non-violent tool for prevention. Across psychology and criminology, evidence suggests that people who know they are being observed are less likely to misbehave or inflict harm. The presence of alert bystanders, surveillance cameras, or even just the perceived **gaze of others** can stop would-be perpetrators in their tracks. Conversely, when wrongdoers believe they are unseen or unaccountable, the **"cloak of invisibility"** can

embolden antisocial and violent acts. This phenomenon – that presence deters and absence abets – forms the central theme of what we call the deterrent power of presence. In essence, **visibility can function as a shield**, projecting a non-violent form of power that protects potential victims by virtue of social observation rather than force.

This article examines the deterrent power of presence from an interdisciplinary perspective. We will first establish a theoretical framework, drawing on **social-philosophical insights** (such as Foucault's notion of the panopticon and Levinas's ethics of the face) and **psychological theories** (including Bandura's social learning theory and Zimbardo's research on deindividuation) to explain why being seen influences behavior. Next, we outline practical mechanisms by which visibility has been harnessed to reduce harm – from CCTV cameras and public lighting to community "eyes on the street" initiatives and symbolic reminders like "watching eyes" posters. International empirical data from organizations such as the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**, **EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)**, **UNICEF**, and **UN Women** will be integrated to illustrate the real-world impact of these measures. We then analyze several **case studies** that put presence to the test: instances where visibility (or its lack) played a role in either averting harm or tragically failing to deter it. In particular, we consider the murders of **Sarah Everard** in the UK and **Mayu Tomita** in Japan – cases which reveal the limits of deterrence when attackers are either highly determined or when trust is cynically abused – and the **Christchurch mosque shootings** in New Zealand, where an ideologically driven perpetrator actively sought visibility for his crime. These cases highlight that while presence can often discourage "ordinary" wrongdoing, it may falter against irrational or fanatical violence.

Building on these analyses, the article introduces a conceptual model of **"presence" as consisting of three dimensions: Existence, Relation, and Legacy**. Existence refers to one's sheer physical visibility or presence in a given moment; Relation encompasses the social connections and recognition that link individuals to a community of others who observe and care; Legacy denotes the enduring presence of one's identity, story, or impact beyond the immediate moment (for example, the prospect of how one's actions will be remembered or recorded for posterity). We argue that these facets together create an "architecture of presence" that underpins its deterrent power. Finally, we delve into the **ethical implications** of relying on visibility as a deterrent. While being seen can enforce good behavior, thinkers like **Friedrich Nietzsche** have cautioned that a morality grounded in fear of judgment (the "morality of timidity") may lack true virtue [6]. On the other hand, the mere sight of the vulnerable Other – Levinas's concept of the face-to-face encounter – can evoke an inherent moral command **"Thou shalt not kill"** [7], suggesting that visibility is intertwined with fundamental ethics. We will explore how presence-as-deterrence can be reconciled with personal autonomy, privacy rights, and genuine moral development. In doing so, we confront questions such as: Does a surveillance-rich society safeguard rights or threaten them? Is deterring harm through omnipresent observation a form of **"soft power"** that uplifts communal responsibility, or does it slide into Orwellian control and Nietzschean power dynamics?

The discussion navigates these tensions and considers how to maximize the protective benefits of presence without undermining trust or freedom. By the conclusion, we aim to have demonstrated that **being seen** – whether by a passerby, a camera lens, or the eyes of future generations – profoundly shapes behavioral choices. The deterrent power of presence is not a panacea for all violence, but it is a critical piece of the puzzle in designing safer, more ethical societies. Through a comprehensive analysis of theory, data, and cases, this article sheds light on both the promise and the pitfalls of harnessing visibility as a **non-violent shield against harm**.

Theoretical Framework

Overview: The idea that someone is watching has long been recognized as a regulator of human conduct. In this section, we examine foundational theories from social philosophy and psychology that explain how and why the presence of observers can deter harmful actions. These range from classic philosophical metaphors of surveillance to experimental findings in behavioral science. Together, they provide a conceptual lens for understanding the power dynamics of being seen.

1. Social-Philosophical Perspectives on Visibility and Power

One of the most influential metaphors for the power of observation is **Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon**, later famously analyzed by philosopher **Michel Foucault**. Bentham's Panopticon was an architectural design for prisons: a central watchtower with one-way windows is surrounded by a circular building of inmate cells. The genius (and menace) of this design is that **the inmates can never be sure when they are being watched**, but know that they could be watched at any time [8]. As Foucault observed in Discipline and Punish, this "permanent visibility" induces inmates to discipline themselves: "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power… he becomes the principle of his own subjection." [9]. In other words, the mere possibility of observation constrains behavior – overt coercion is rendered unnecessary. Foucault chillingly summed up the effect: **"Visibility is a trap."** Under constant potential gaze, individuals police themselves to avoid punishment [10]. While Foucault's focus was on institutional power over prisoners, the principle extends broadly: in schools, workplaces, and public spaces, people alter their actions when they know they are visible to authority or to peers. The Panopticon illustrates deterrence via uncertainty: because one might be seen at any moment, one behaves as if one is being watched at every moment.

Crucially, the Panopticon also reveals an ethical tension at the heart of visibility as deterrence. Foucault noted that Bentham's principle was that power should be **"visible and unverifiable"** – the watched know the tower is there, but can never verify if the watcher is present [11]. The psychological outcome is **self-regulation through fear of being seen**, a dynamic that raises concerns about autonomy and privacy. Indeed, **Friedrich Nietzsche** would likely characterize Panoptic surveillance as an external, fear-based morality. In Beyond Good and Evil, Nietzsche critiqued what he called the "morality of the herd", rooted in **timidity** and fear of punishment or disapproval [12]. He suggested that many people behave not from inner virtue but from fear of being caught or judged – **"most people aren't actually moral; they're just afraid of being judged immoral"** (a sentiment often attributed to Nietzsche's analysis of social conduct [13] [14]). When society relies on ubiquitous surveillance and judgment to enforce good behavior, it risks creating what Nietzsche described as a pathologically soft culture that "sides with those who harm it" out of a discomfort with administering punishment [6]. In Nietzsche's view, a morality that is compelled by the external gaze – by the presence of watchers – might be considered a **"morality of timidity"**, inauthentic and rooted in weakness [12]. This introduces an ethical paradox: while the gaze can deter wrongdoing, over-reliance on it might stunt the development of genuine conscience or courage. We will return to this dilemma in the **Ethical Architecture** section, weighing fear-driven compliance against more autonomous ethics.

In contrast to Nietzsche's skepticism, other philosophers have seen an inherently positive ethical force in the presence of the Other. **Emmanuel Levinas**, a 20th-century ethical philosopher, argued that the **face-to-face encounter** with another person carries a profound moral imperative. The face of the vulnerable Other, Levinas writes, commands us **"Thou shalt not kill"** before any word is spoken [7]. The very presence of the Other's face – "naked and defenseless" – issues a silent appeal not to harm them [15] [16]. Unlike the Panopticon's one-way, superior gaze, Levinas's concept is relational and asymmetrical: seeing the Other's face makes us responsible for them. He describes the face as levelling our impulse for

domination; when we truly encounter someone's presence, we recognize an ethical claim upon us. "The face is the most basic mode of responsibility," Levinas wrote [17]. In practical terms, this suggests that humanizing visibility – seeing a potential victim as a person, not an object – can deter violence by awakening empathy and moral law. It is notable that even in extremely violent societies, perpetrators often seek to dehumanize or avoid looking at their victims' faces, precisely to suspend this inhibiting effect. Levinas's insight thus complements the deterrent power of presence: it's not just being watched by authorities that matters, but also **being seen as an ethical subject by one's fellow humans**. A would-be attacker who meets the eyes of their target may find it harder to proceed, feeling the implicit plea of "do not hurt me." This aligns with psychological evidence that inducing empathy can reduce aggression. Levinas's philosophy imbues the idea of presence with a moral dimension: visibility doesn't only restrain through fear of consequence (as in Bentham or Nietzsche), but through **conscience and compassion** activated by the relation of self to Other.

Between Foucault, Nietzsche, and Levinas, we see two faces of "being seen": one face is **surveillance**, a top-down power that deters through fear and accountability; the other face is **recognition**, a horizontal relation that deters through empathy and moral appeal. Both imply that presence can forestall violence, but they operate via different psychological mechanisms – one external, one internal. **Social contract theory** also historically valued the idea of witnesses and publicity. Enlightenment thinkers like Kant and Rousseau believed that publicity (the knowledge one's actions will be seen by the public) is a guard against injustice. Kant argued that we should act as if our deeds were to be observed by all mankind – a nod to the idea that an action fit for public view is more likely to be moral. In modern democratic theory, transparency and open trials similarly serve as deterrents to abuse: officials who know their decisions are public behave better (in theory) than those operating in secrecy.

Finally, an important social-philosophical concept is the role of **community presence and collective vigilance**. Sociologist **Jane Jacobs**, in her classic work The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961), introduced the idea of "eyes on the street." She observed that streets with a rich presence of local people watching – shopkeepers, neighbors, passers-by – tend to be safer. These informal guardians create an environment where strangers feel they might be noticed if they try something criminal. Jacobs' insight has influenced urban design: features like open storefronts, front porches, and pedestrian traffic all enhance natural surveillance, which in turn deters street crime. This is a practical affirmation of the panoptic principle in everyday life: **the more communal observers, the less space for wrongdoing**. It also highlights the relational aspect: in tight-knit neighborhoods, people are not just seen, but seen as members of a community, which further discourages anti-social behavior. A potential mugger on a busy, well-lit main street knows that if he attacks someone, multiple eyes will witness it (and possibly intervene or later identify him), creating a strong disincentive. By contrast, in an empty alley or anonymous big-city setting, that social deterrence evaporates.

In summary, social philosophy provides a rich understanding of how **visibility = accountability**. Whether through the imposed gaze of surveillance (Foucault's Panopticism), the internalized gaze of societal judgment (Nietzsche's herd morality), or the intersubjective gaze of ethical recognition (Levinas's face), being seen ties into power and morality. Presence creates a **"field of visibility"** in which harmful acts carry greater risk – be it risk of punishment, shame, or simply the sting of seeing the humanity of one's victim. This lays the groundwork for the psychological theories that follow, which detail how exactly being observed alters individual behavior.

2. Psychological Mechanisms of Deterrence via Presence

From a psychological standpoint, the deterrent effect of being seen can be attributed to several well-documented phenomena. These include **social learning and modeling**, **evaluation apprehension**, and the converse phenomena of **anonymity and deindividuation**. Together, they explain why most people

“on their best behavior” when watched – and why some situations (crowds, darkness, masks) lower those inhibitions dramatically.

Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory provides a first key mechanism: people learn not only from their own experience but by observing the experiences of others. In Bandura’s classic **Bobo doll experiments** in the 1960s, children who witnessed an adult model being aggressive to a toy were more likely to imitate that aggression – especially if the model was rewarded or suffered no consequences [18] [19]. Conversely, when children saw the adult model punished for the aggression, they were far less likely to imitate it. This demonstrated **vicarious reinforcement and punishment**: seeing someone else get away with violence can encourage imitation, whereas seeing someone reprimanded or shamed for violence can deter one from doing the same [20]. In daily life, this means that if a potential offender knows of others being caught or condemned for a similar misdeed (i.e. they are made visible and held accountable), they are less inclined to take the risk themselves. Bandura emphasized that people engage in a constant cost-benefit analysis (often subconscious) based on anticipated consequences – a process involving “motivational and reinforcement processes” [21]. If an individual **perceives a high likelihood of punishment or social disapproval** (“costs”) from a visible act, they will likely refrain, especially if they have mentally “observed” (through news, stories, or personal witness) others being caught. In Bandura’s terms, the presence of observers increases the expected costs of aggression. The **mediating role of cognition** is also important: one must be aware of being observed and anticipate consequences for the deterrent to work. Someone who is intoxicated or irrational may not register observers or may discount consequences, which is why presence does not always prevent violence (as in the case of ideologically driven attackers who want publicity, discussed later).

Bandura’s theory also touches on **self-regulation**. Humans develop an internal self that monitors their behavior in light of social norms – a capacity that Bandura calls **self-efficacy and self-regulation**. Part of this self-regulation comes from **internalized observers**: essentially, we carry within us the imagined gaze of our parents, peers, or society at large (a concept earlier noted by sociologist Charles Cooley as the “looking-glass self”). Knowing that a certain behavior would make us look bad in the eyes of others often keeps us in check. Even **symbolic cues of observation** can trigger this effect. For instance, a study found that simply displaying a pair of eye images above a college honor-system coffee pot caused people to pay three times more for their coffee than when a flower image was displayed [22]. The image of **“watching eyes”** created a feeling of being observed and thus nudged people into honest behavior. This “watching eyes effect” has been replicated in various settings: posters with eyes have reduced littering and theft, even though the observation is only imaginary. In one striking field experiment at Newcastle University (UK), researchers hung posters of big, staring eyes with the words “We Are Watching You” above bicycle racks. The result was a **62% reduction in bike thefts** at those racks [23]. The theft problem was displaced to other areas without the posters (a 63% increase in those areas) [24], indicating that thieves simply avoided the spots that gave the feeling of being watched. This demonstrates the potent psychological effect of even illusory presence on deterrence – our brains respond to eyes and surveillance cues by heightening self-awareness and caution.

Complementing social learning theory is the concept of **evaluation apprehension** from social psychology. This is the anxiety or concern people feel when they know others are watching and judging their actions. Classic studies on social facilitation found that the presence of an audience can improve performance on simple tasks but may hinder performance on complex ones, due to heightened arousal. The key point here is that **being observed triggers self-consciousness**; people anticipate praise or blame from those observing, and thus try to behave in socially acceptable ways. In the context of antisocial or violent behavior, evaluation apprehension usually acts as a brake: most individuals would be embarrassed or ashamed to be seen assaulting someone or stealing in front of a crowd. They fear the negative evaluation (“Everyone will think I’m a bad person” or “I’ll be labelled a criminal”) as well as tangible consequences like being caught. This fear of social judgment is a milder form of deterrence than

fear of legal punishment, but it can be very immediate and visceral. It helps explain why even without a police officer in sight, a person might still refrain from harassing someone on a busy street – not because they are saintly, but because onlookers' disapproval is a powerful deterrent. Indeed, a UK survey in the wake of the Sarah Everard case found that many harassers rely on the **bystander effect** (assuming no one will intervene) to get away with misconduct, and increasing public willingness to call out such behavior is seen as key to prevention [25] [26]. When bystanders are present and willing to act, the calculus of the offender changes: suddenly there is both social and material risk to misbehaving.

The flip side of being seen is **not being seen** – and here lies a danger. **Philip Zimbardo's research on deindividuation** in the 1960s–70s revealed how anonymity can free people from normal restraints. In one notable experiment, Zimbardo had participants play the role of a pseudo-"teacher" administering electric shocks (similar to Milgram's setup). Some participants wore large hoods and lab coats obscuring their identities (anonymous condition), while others wore normal clothes and name tags (identifiable condition). The results were stark: those in the anonymous Ku Klux Klan-like garb delivered shocks to a (fake) victim for significantly longer durations and with less hesitation than those who were easily identifiable [27] [28]. Simply put, **anonymity increased cruelty**. Without the possibility of being recognized or held personally accountable, participants' internal checks and empathic inhibitions were weakened. In a variant study, when participants were dressed not as Klan members but as nurses (a prosocial identity) even anonymously, they shocked less than a control group [28] – suggesting that it's not just anonymity per se, but the removal of individual accountability combined with situational cues, that directs behavior. Zimbardo noted that under deindividuating conditions, people experience a **loss of self-awareness and a reduction of "evaluation apprehension"** – a state in which **"normal controls based on guilt, shame, or fear"** are diminished [29] [30]. In crowds or uniforms, individuals might feel that "no one knows it's me" and also adopt a group mentality ("everyone is doing it"), which can lead to acts they'd never commit alone. This explains phenomena from violent riots to online trolling: when people feel effectively invisible or not individually accountable, antisocial behavior becomes more likely.

What Zimbardo's work underscores for our purposes is the **critical importance of identifiability** as a deterrent. If being seen as a distinct person (with a name, face, and reputation) encourages restraint, then any factor that obscures one's identity can remove that restraint. Darkness, masks, large crowds, online anonymity – all these reduce the deterrent power of presence by making the "presence" diffuse or the watcher unable to tie actions to consequences. Conversely, measures that **enhance identifiability** – like name tags, body cameras on police uniforms, or well-lit public spaces with CCTV – heighten the sense that if I misbehave, I will be known and caught. This aligns with Routine Activity Theory in criminology, which posits that crime is likely when a **motivated offender** meets a **suitable target** in the **absence of a capable guardian**. The "capable guardian" need not be a police officer; it can be any figure or measure that **watches over the target** [31] [32]. An offender lurking in a parking lot at night may be motivated and see a lone victim (suitable target), but if a security guard or even a passerby (capable guardian) is present, the offender often aborts the attempt. The presence of guardians increases the offender's perceived risk dramatically. In support of this, studies find tangible crime reductions with greater guardianship: for example, **closed-circuit TV (CCTV) surveillance** in public places has been shown to reduce overall crime by an average of about **7%**, with larger effects (up to **50%** reduction) in controlled environments like car parks [33]. Improved street lighting (which effectively adds the "presence" of any neighbors who can now see the street) is associated with roughly **20–30%** reductions in nighttime crime [34]. These statistics illustrate how altering the environment to increase visibility and observation correlates with lower incidence of wrongdoing. When **"everyone can see everything"**, potential offenders have to assume they will be noticed and identified, which for many is deterrent enough.

In sum, multiple psychological mechanisms converge on the same lesson: **make the potential perpetrator feel watched, and you engage their self-control**. Through social learning, people know what behaviors will get them punished or shamed if seen, and thus avoid those when under observation

[35] . Through evaluation apprehension, people's social anxiety keeps their aggression in check in public. And by eliminating anonymity, you ensure personal accountability which inhibits impulsive violence. Together, these mechanisms form the bedrock of the deterrent power of presence. They also foreshadow why this deterrent has limits: if an individual lacks these normal psychological brakes (due to extreme ideology, emotional disturbance, or a context that overwhelms fear of consequences), then mere presence might not stop them. For most ordinary situations and offenders, however, the research suggests that **visibility is one of the cheapest and most effective forms of crime prevention** – a point we now turn to in practical application.

Methodology

Approach: This study is interdisciplinary and qualitative, integrating literature and data across philosophy, psychology, sociology, and criminology. Rather than conducting new experiments or surveys, we perform a **comprehensive literature review** and **thematic analysis** of existing research and reports, combined with **case study analysis**. Key steps in our methodology include:

- **Literature & Theory Review:** We surveyed seminal works in social philosophy (e.g. Foucault, Levinas, Nietzsche) and psychology (e.g. Bandura, Zimbardo, Latané and Darley on bystander effect) that relate to observation, behavior regulation, and ethics. This provided theoretical constructs (such as panopticism, social learning, deindividuation) to frame our inquiry. We ensured to use the latest interpretations (up to 2024) of these theories, acknowledging recent updates (for example, modern findings on the "watching eyes" effect [33] and new discussions of surveillance ethics).

- **Data Integration:** We gathered **empirical data** from authoritative international sources to illustrate the scope of violence and the effects of visibility measures. This included:

- **ILO (2022):** the first global survey on violence and harassment at work, providing statistics on prevalence and gender differences [36] .
- **EU FRA (2024):** the EU-wide survey on gender-based violence, offering data on how common violence is and how rarely it is reported [4] [5] .
- **UNICEF (2022):** reports on violence against children globally (e.g. child homicide rates, sexual violence incidence) [3] .
- **UN Women (2023):** data on femicide and domestic killings, highlighting patterns like the proportion of women killed by partners/family [37] .
- Other studies on environmental crime prevention (lighting, CCTV) and social interventions (bystander training outcomes).

These data were treated not as variables in a statistical model but as **illustrative evidence** to contextualize and support theoretical points. Whenever specific figures are cited (percentages, ratios, etc.), the source is footnoted to maintain academic rigor in line with Chicago style.

- **Case Selection & Analysis:** We selected three high-profile violent incidents as **case studies** to examine presence-deterrence dynamics in real life. The criteria for selection were: (1) geographic diversity (cases from Europe, Asia, and Oceania to ensure international relevance); (2) differing contexts of violence (street abduction by a known authority figure, stalking attack by an obsessed fan, and a mass shooting by an extremist) to test our thesis under varied conditions; and (3) significant public discourse on prevention lessons learned. The cases chosen were:
- **Sarah Everard (UK, 2021):** A woman abducted and murdered by an on-duty police officer, highlighting issues of trust and absence of bystanders.

- **Mayu Tomita (Japan, 2016):** A pop idol stabbed dozens of times by a stalker despite prior warnings, illustrating the failure of authorities' presence and the effect of obsessive motivation.
- **Christchurch Mosque Shootings (New Zealand, 2019):** A terror attack explicitly staged for livestream, representing the extreme case where visibility was desired by the perpetrator.

For each case, we conducted a mini "investigation" using reliable sources (news reports, official inquiries, academic commentary) to reconstruct the role (or lack) of presence and observation. We then performed a **comparative analysis**: contrasting cases where presence failed with scenarios where presence succeeds (drawn from literature, e.g. examples of bystander intervention preventing assaults) to identify key factors that modulate the effect of presence.

- **Conceptual Framework Construction:** Using insights from the above, we developed the **Existence–Relation–Legacy framework** for presence. This was an inductive process: we noted recurring themes about what "presence" means (physical immediacy, social connectedness, lasting influence) and abstracted these into the three components. We then verified this tripartite model against our cases and theories (does each component appear and matter? Yes, as discussed later) and refined the definitions accordingly. The framework is our theoretical contribution, aimed at synthesizing complex aspects of presence into an accessible model.

- **Ethical Analysis:** We employed a normative analysis method, engaging with ethical theories and real-world implications. This meant critically examining the moral trade-offs of relying on surveillance and social monitoring (drawing on privacy rights literature, Kantian ethics about treating persons as ends not means, etc.). We also looked at policy documents (like the **Angiolini Inquiry** into the Everard case) and sociological critiques of surveillance to incorporate practical ethical concerns (public trust in police, risk of profiling, etc.). This part is necessarily qualitative and speculative, but grounded in referenced viewpoints.

Throughout the methodology, **footnote citations** have been used extensively to credit sources of data, ideas, and direct quotations, following Chicago-style footnoting. A full **Bibliography** is provided at the end. We did not conduct interviews or first-hand surveys due to scope, but we did leverage a broad array of secondary data. Potential limitations of our approach include reliance on reported data (with issues like under-reporting bias in violence statistics) and the challenge of isolating "presence" as a factor (it often co-varies with other conditions, e.g. well-lit areas also often have better policing). We mitigate these by triangulating multiple sources and acknowledging uncertainties where appropriate.

In summary, this research is a synthesis of existing knowledge, aiming for depth of understanding rather than new empirical generalizations. By blending theory with concrete data and cases, the methodology enables a robust exploration of how **presence (in various forms) acts as a non-violent deterrent** and where its limits lie.

Practical Mechanisms of Visibility as a Shield

How is the deterrent power of presence applied in practice? In this section, we outline concrete mechanisms and strategies that leverage visibility and observation to protect individuals and communities. These range from personal safety habits to urban design choices to technological systems. Each mechanism can be seen as creating or enhancing **one of the facets of presence** – Existence, Relation, or Legacy – that together form a protective shield. We also cite evidence of effectiveness where available, acknowledging that context often determines outcomes.

1. Natural Surveillance and Community "Eyes"

One of the most basic safeguards is simply having **people around**. Offenders generally prefer isolated targets and locations where the chance of being seen (and thus caught or challenged) is minimal. Therefore, fostering active, populated spaces is a deterrence strategy. For example, **neighborhood watch programs** encourage residents to be visible on streets and to collectively keep an eye out for suspicious activities. The mere signage of "Neighborhood Watch – We report all suspicious activity" can dissuade opportunistic criminals by signaling an alert, observing community. A meta-analysis of such programs indicates that neighborhoods with active watch schemes tend to see reductions in burglary and vandalism compared to similar areas without them (though success varies with how truly active the participation is).

Informal guardianship is even more effective when people are not just present, but willing to intervene or call for help. After the Sarah Everard tragedy in London, there was a surge of interest in **bystander intervention training** in the UK – courses that teach ordinary citizens how to safely intervene when they witness harassment or potential danger [25] [26]. The logic is simple: if more people on the street feel confident to step up, perpetrators can no longer assume that bystanders will stay passive. Even a shouted phrase like "Hey, I see you, stop that!" or a phone call to police can disrupt an incident. Statistical evidence supports the need for this cultural shift: in a compilation of over 10,000 street harassment reports in Britain, about **two-thirds** of the cases had other people present, yet only **7%** of the time did any bystander intervene to help [26]. Those numbers show both the latent potential (in 66% of incidents, someone could have intervened) and the current gap. Increasing that 7% intervention rate is a clear target for improving safety. Practical measures include public awareness campaigns (encouraging people not to "mind their own business" when someone is in danger), training sessions (often teaching the 5 D's: Direct, Distract, Delegate, Delay, Document as various ways to intervene), and even legal Good Samaritan protections to assuage fears of liability. An illustrative success story: In France, after high-profile harassment cases, the government launched nationwide bystander training and a smartphone app for reporting harassment in real time. Early reports suggested improved confidence among the public in stepping forward, though measuring actual prevention is challenging.

Public space design also plays a crucial role. City planners now speak of designing for "natural surveillance" – ensuring sightlines are open, public areas are well-lit, and there are "active edges" (shops, cafes, windows) along streets so that there are always eyes on the street. For instance, an analysis of urban parks found that those with more **entrances, transparent fencing, and nearby active businesses** had significantly lower crime rates than parks enclosed by solid walls or with few access points. The rationale: a mugger or assailant in a park that is overlooked by apartment windows or café terraces knows that any unusual activity is likely to draw attention. In an isolated park corner with tall hedges, the same criminal feels emboldened. **Improved street lighting** is one of the simplest yet most effective modifications: a review of multiple studies concluded that areas with upgraded lighting saw a median **36% reduction** in crime at night [34]. Lighting increases the effective presence of potential witnesses by extending their range of vision. It also enhances people's feeling of safety, which can lead to more people using an area after dark – a virtuous cycle, since more law-abiding foot traffic means more guardians present.

Surveillance technology amplifies natural surveillance. A prominent example is **CCTV cameras** in public and private spaces. While they cannot intervene in the moment, cameras deter crime by raising the probability of offenders being identified and caught after the fact. Britain famously has one of the highest densities of CCTV cameras in the world, and studies have shown modest but real crime reductions in camera-covered zones (particularly for premeditated crimes like vehicle theft) [33]. In car parks, as noted earlier, CCTV combined with other measures cut vehicle break-ins roughly in half [38]. The knowledge that "someone (or something) could be recording you" approximates the effect of a human gaze. However,

cameras work best when advertised – e.g. signage that says “This area is under video surveillance” – because the deterrence lies in the perception of being watched. Modern advancements include **networked camera systems with AI**, which not only record but can alert authorities to atypical behaviors (like a crowd running or screams detected by microphones). These essentially provide a “virtual presence” of law enforcement that can respond quickly, thereby increasing the guardian effect. There are debates over privacy with widespread CCTV, which we will touch on later, but from a pure safety perspective, surveillance tech has become a mainstay of urban deterrence architecture.

Beyond stationary cameras, **body-worn cameras** on police and even private security serve a dual purpose: deterring assaults on the officers (people behave better when they know their interaction is filmed) and deterring excessive force by the officers themselves (officers, knowing they are also being recorded, tend to follow protocol more closely). Studies in various police departments have found that use-of-force incidents often drop when officers use body cams, and complaints against police also drop – a sign that **everyone’s behavior improves under the eye of the camera**. For example, an evaluative study in Rialto, California found police body cameras were associated with a roughly 50% reduction in use-of-force incidents by officers and an 88% reduction in citizen complaints, suggesting a strong self-awareness effect on both sides of the interaction.

Finally, **personal presence strategies** help individuals harness the power of visibility for their own safety. These include: avoiding isolation (e.g. walking with friends at night or in well-traveled routes rather than alone in secluded shortcuts), making oneself visible (wearing bright clothing, carrying a flashlight or using a phone light in dark areas, etc.), and signaling awareness (making eye contact with passersby, which both shows potential aggressors that you see them – i.e. they cannot count on surprise – and gauges friendly faces who could help if needed). Many self-defense courses emphasize “walking confidently and looking around” as a deterrent to being targeted; this is essentially using one’s own presence (confidence and alertness) as a signal that any attack will be noticed and resisted, not silently endured. Even the act of **calling someone on the phone and talking while walking** has a deterrent effect – would-be attackers know that the person on the other end could serve as a witness who hears what is happening and calls police (some safety apps allow a quick audio stream to emergency contacts for this reason). The principle is that the more connected you are to others, even remotely, the less attractive a target you become. One poignant example is the common advice for someone who feels threatened in public to **move into a populated, well-lit place** (like a shop or bus) or even to approach a stranger and say “Can you please pretend you know me? I feel unsafe” – thereby instantly creating a social presence that can ward off a harasser. Many women have reported escaping harassment on public transit by making eye contact with another passenger and starting an impromptu conversation, signaling to the harasser that “she is not alone; someone is watching us.” In effect, they manufactured presence to deter further aggression.

2. Formal Supervision and Law Enforcement Visibility

At a more formal level, the presence of **authority figures** is a time-honored deterrent. A uniformed police officer patrolling a beat is often enough to prevent incidents in that area simply by virtue of being seen. Police departments worldwide organize visible patrols in high-crime areas for this reason, an approach supported by the “Routine Activities” framework we mentioned: officers are capable guardians whose visible presence disrupts the convergence of offender and target. Research on “hot spots policing” – where officers intensively patrol small high-crime locations – has found notable short-term reductions in crime at those hot spots (without simply displacing it, if done correctly). For instance, a study in Minneapolis found that increasing patrol presence (short, frequent passes through) in crime hot spots led to a **6–13% drop in crime calls** in those areas relative to control areas, without evidence of displacement [33]. The effect stems largely from deterrence: potential offenders see the officer or know they might

appear at any time, and thus desist or go elsewhere. It's the Panopticon with a predictable schedule – less ideal than uncertainty, but still impactful.

However, as the Sarah Everard case tragically highlighted, the presence of an authority figure is not always benign. In Everard's case, the perpetrator was a police officer who **abused the trust and obedience his presence commanded**. Wayne Couzens, in March 2021, stopped Everard under the pretense of a fake arrest (using COVID lockdown rules as an excuse), handcuffed her, and then abducted and murdered her. She likely complied precisely because the officer's presence, uniform, and warrant card signaled legitimate authority. This incident shocked the public and led to soul-searching in the UK about police vetting and women's trust in law enforcement [39] [40]. One direct outcome was police and activists advising that if a lone officer in plainclothes tries to arrest someone (especially a woman) and the person feels unsafe, they have the right to demand a second officer's presence or to move to a public place. The **lesson learned** is that the protective presence must itself be trustworthy. A **corrupt guardian** not only fails to deter harm but perpetrates it, exploiting the very assumptions of safety. This underscores a crucial point: presence works as a shield only within a framework of **ethical conduct and accountability**. If those entrusted as guardians (police, security guards, etc.) misuse their power, the deterrent architecture flips into a tool for predators (as Couzens exemplified). In response, the UK initiated reforms including better vetting of officers with reports of misconduct (Couzens had prior red flags that went unaddressed [41]) and campaigns encouraging bystanders to question even officers if something seems off – essentially inviting community presence to supervise the supervisors.

Another formal measure is the use of **security personnel and guardians in specific settings**: for example, hospitals employ security in emergency departments to deter assaults on staff, schools have hall monitors or resource officers to deter bullying and violence, and bars/nightclubs have bouncers to deter fights or sexual aggression. The effectiveness of these depends on numbers and training. A single guard in a huge hospital might not be a sufficient presence to cover all wards, whereas a visible guard at a bar entrance checking IDs might drastically reduce the likelihood weapons are brought in or known troublemakers enter (deterrence by **access control** presence). In workplaces, an interesting approach is the adoption of **"buddy systems"** for vulnerable employees (like social workers or nurses visiting clients alone). Knowing that an assault would have two witnesses (the buddy and the victim) can deter clients inclined toward violence. It also ensures quick help if something does occur. Lone worker safety solutions, such as GPS check-ins and panic buttons, similarly aim to create a virtual presence of help – if a taxi driver or utility worker is attacked, an alarm triggers responders, which serves as both a deterrent (assailants know an alarm will bring help) and a safeguard for rapid intervention.

One notable technological extension of law enforcement presence is the use of **drones and aerial surveillance** for monitoring public events or high-crime neighborhoods. Drones can visibly hover, essentially saying "eyes in the sky are watching." Some cities have reported drops in street crime after deploying police surveillance drones in open drug-market areas, although privacy concerns are again raised.

Finally, **legal and institutional transparency** can be seen as a macro-level "presence" mechanism. When courts, government proceedings, and institutional processes are open to public scrutiny (through media or public attendance), officials are deterred from engaging in corrupt or abusive behavior. This is analogous to personal deterrence but at a structural scale – sunlight as the best disinfectant. For example, body-cam footage of police encounters, when released, serves to inform the public and deter future misconduct by making clear that any abuse will be seen and judged in the court of public opinion. Whistleblower laws and ombudsman offices similarly create an environment where wrongdoing within organizations cannot count on remaining invisible. If a bureaucrat knows that documents could be FOIA-requested by journalists, they may think twice about writing an incriminating email, effectively deterring

unethical decisions through a form of anticipated presence (the "future gaze" of investigators or historians – connecting to the Legacy component of presence).

3. Symbolic and Digital Presence

Not all "presence" is physical in the here-and-now. Symbolic cues and digital connectivity also create a form of presence that can deter harm. We've already mentioned the **"watching eyes" posters** which are symbolic observers proven to reduce thefts and littering by triggering the feeling of being watched [23] [33]. Other symbolic guardians include alarm system stickers on a home ("Protected by XYZ Security"), which suggest an unseen presence watching the house, or even scarecrows in a field (for animals, the concept is similar!). In some communities, cut-out silhouettes of police cars or officers are placed by roadsides to deter speeding – drivers slow down thinking a real cop is there. Though these eventually lose effectiveness as locals learn they're fake, they illustrate the principle that the idea of presence influences behavior nearly as much as actual presence, at least initially.

Another subtle symbol is the **uniform**. Much as a police or security uniform signals authority (as discussed), even a brightly colored safety vest and flashlight can lend an aura of guardianship. In some neighborhoods plagued by crime, residents have organized citizen patrols wearing identifiable vests or armbands to walk the streets at night. They may not have weapons or legal powers, but the **visual symbol** of patrol deters criminals who prefer un-policed areas. The "Guardian Angels" – a volunteer anti-crime group started in New York City in 1979 – famously wore red berets and jackets while patrolling subways and streets [42]. While controversial at times, they reported that their **conspicuous presence** often prevented muggings and assaults; at minimum their patrols made commuters feel safer [43]. The red beret became a symbol that "someone is watching out."

In the digital age, **connectivity provides presence** in new ways. One is the prevalence of **smartphones with cameras**. Potential offenders now know that anyone might film their misconduct and upload it where it could go viral. This has arguably deterred some abuses – for instance, police officers aware that bystanders might film them may act more within the law (post-George Floyd, many police departments reminded officers they are effectively always on camera in public). Similarly, racially or sexually harassing someone on a train now risks ending up on YouTube or TikTok, shaming the harasser globally (numerous instances of "public shaming" videos have indeed identified and chastised offenders caught in the act). This possibility of **"viral visibility"** extends the concept of presence beyond the immediate moment to a potentially massive future audience – a strong deterrent for anyone who cares about their reputation or legal consequences. In essence, the **internet is a multiplying force** for the deterrent power of presence: it transforms one person with a phone into the eyes of thousands.

On the flip side, the internet can also be a space of anonymity where presence is lacking (hence the cesspools of online harassment). To counter that, some platforms have implemented measures like verified identities or algorithmic moderation – a kind of automated presence that "sees" and flags abuse. While not entirely effective, the knowledge that certain hate speech or threats will trigger account suspension can deter some bad actors online. Law enforcement also increasingly monitors public social media for violent intents (as with some mass shooters who signaled their plans). The **presence of digital monitors** – whether human moderators or AI – is a new frontier of deterrence, trying to shine a light in dark corners of the web.

Finally, we consider **Legacy**, the idea that one's actions being known to future generations or one's own future self can deter extreme wrongdoing. This is more abstract but evident in cases like would-be mass killers who might be deterred by the thought of infamy or, conversely, sometimes motivated by it. For many rational actors, the thought "How will this act affect my legacy? Will I be forever remembered as a monster?" can give pause. In the realm of corporate or political wrongdoing, an official might decide not

to engage in corruption if they fear their name will be disgraced in historical record. This connects to Nietzsche's notion of **pride and honor** as internal checks: if one has pride in one's legacy or self-image, the "presence" of an observing posterity can function like an ever-watching judge. While difficult to quantify, this deterrent can be very personal – for example, someone resisting participating in a crime because they think, "My family (or community) would know and I couldn't face them". That imagined gaze of loved ones or descendants is a form of relation/legacy presence entwined, operating within conscience.

In summary, practical implementations of the power of presence span **multiple levels** – from individual actions (traveling in groups, staying in sight) to community efforts (neighborhood watch, active bystanders) to environmental design (lighting, open layouts) to technology (cameras, alarms, connectivity). All function on the basic equation that **visibility = risk for perpetrators**. When potential offenders perceive high risk (of getting caught, identified, shamed, or stopped) thanks to some form of presence, many will choose not to offend. However, the effectiveness of these measures depends on context and the rationality of the adversary. They work best on opportunistic or calculating offenders who respond to risk. The next section will examine cases, including those with irrational or ideological attackers for whom typical deterrents tragically failed, thereby highlighting the boundaries of presence as a protective shield.

Empirical Cases: When Presence Succeeds and When It Fails

Real-world cases provide a stress test for the theories and mechanisms discussed. In this section, we analyze several incidents to illustrate how presence (or its absence) played out in practice. These cases also show the limitations of visibility as a deterrent, especially against determined offenders. For each case, we describe the scenario, then assess the role of presence in either preventing or failing to prevent the harm. The cases chosen – Sarah Everard (England), Mayu Tomita (Japan), and the Christchurch mosque shootings (New Zealand) – involve different cultures and types of perpetrators, allowing for a comparative perspective.

Case 1: The Abduction and Murder of Sarah Everard (UK, 2021)

Background: On March 3, 2021, 33-year-old Sarah Everard was walking home alone along a main road in London around 9 pm, after visiting a friend for dinner. The UK was under COVID-19 lockdown rules at the time. Everard was spotted by an on-duty Metropolitan Police officer, Wayne Couzens, who was looking for a victim. Exploiting his authority, Couzens stopped Everard, showed her his police warrant card, and falsely arrested her for a supposed COVID rule violation [44]. Witnesses in passing cars saw a woman (Everard) being handcuffed by a man (Couzens) but thought nothing amiss, assuming it was an undercover police action. With Everard in handcuffs, Couzens put her in his car and drove far outside London, where he later raped and murdered her. Her body was found a week later. The case caused national outrage and grief in Britain, not least because the perpetrator was a serving police officer – someone whose very presence should have signified protection, not danger.

Presence Analysis: This case is horrifying precisely because it flips the script: the guardian was the aggressor. However, it starkly demonstrates how absence of the right kind of presence facilitated the crime. Everard was walking on a public street, but it was night and pandemic restrictions meant fewer people around than usual. Had it been broad daylight with many pedestrians, Couzens might not have dared to make his move so openly. The limited presence of bystanders was a factor – indeed, one or two witnesses in passing vehicles later recalled seeing what they thought was an arrest in progress [41]. They did not intervene (since it appeared legitimate), but importantly, none could hear or closely observe the interaction. Everard, under duress, likely complied quietly. Here, **presence of bystanders existed but**

without clarity. If a bystander had sensed Everard was in distress or questioned why a lone plainclothes man was arresting a woman, they might have intervened or at least recorded the license plate. Unfortunately, the superficial impression of Couzens's authority overrode any suspicion. This indicates a nuance: presence is only effective if those present can interpret and act on what they see. In a sense, Couzens weaponized his visible markers (police ID, handcuffs) to neutralize the deterrent effect of the semi-public setting.

The absence of a **second officer** was another missing presence. Police protocol in the UK now acknowledges that it is unusual for a lone plainclothes officer to detain someone; going forward, people (especially women) are advised to demand to speak to the officer's radio control or have another officer attend if they feel unsafe. Had Everard been able to call for a uniformed officer or ask a bystander to stay and observe, it might have disrupted Couzens's plan. In fact, part of the fallout is that **London's Metropolitan Police** now instructs that plainclothes officers will not make solo arrests and that if one must, they will proactively hail a passerby to witness (an extraordinary measure reflecting lost trust). We see here that **the right kind of presence – a witness or a partner – was exactly what Couzens worked to avoid**. He chose a moment and method to isolate Everard while giving the illusion of proper authority.

The Everard case also illustrates how **presence of mind in potential victims and bystanders** matters. It is agonizing to consider, but Sarah Everard likely felt she had to comply with the officer. She might not have been aware that police abductors exist (a very rare scenario). The public campaign after her murder has been to educate people, e.g., "If you're uncertain about an officer's legitimacy, wave down a bus or run to a house or phone 999". Essentially, creating your own presence of others in the situation. A bus driver in London, for instance, has been told they should stop if a lone person flags them in distress, even if not at a bus stop – precisely because the bus driver's presence can safeguard against a false arrest scenario. These are unusual responses to an extraordinary betrayal of trust.

Statistically, the case is outlier – but the structural issues it exposed are not. A review (the Angiolini Inquiry) found that Couzens had previous allegations of indecent exposure that were not properly addressed [41]. In one instance days before the murder, he exposed himself in a McDonald's drive-thru. If those incidents had led to action, Couzens might have been suspended or arrested, removing him from public presence as an officer. The fact that he remained in uniform meant he carried the symbolic presence of law and order right up to committing his crime. Trust in the Metropolitan Police suffered greatly; surveys showed many women felt they could no longer **"trust police officers as individuals"** after this case [39] [45]. In terms of deterrence, this erosion of trust is problematic: police rely on community cooperation (people reporting crimes, accepting help). If presence of police is no longer seen unequivocally as a shield, its deterrent effect could diminish or even invert (people, especially women, might avoid police presence out of fear). Recognizing this, the Met has sought to **re-establish positive presence**: more patrols by female officers, publicity about vetting improvements, and clear signals that "bad actors among us will be seen and removed." The Everard case, then, serves as a caution: presence itself must be accountable and trusted. For presence to deter harm, those who embody presence (like police) must be worthy of the authority their presence carries.

In conclusion, Sarah Everard's murder underscores the importance of **active bystander presence and the perils of false authority presence**. It is a case where all the usual deterrents (streetlights, some passersby, a presumably safe city street) failed because the attacker manipulated the scenario to negate them. It teaches that even when someone is watching, it matters who is watching and whether they interpret correctly. The case led to concrete changes aimed at making sure no officer is effectively unseen (better supervision within police) and no member of the public is truly alone when confronted by authority (encouraging dialing 999 or attracting attention). It's a tragic demonstration that while presence can protect, one cannot rely on assumptions – presence must be vigilant and engaged to fulfill its deterrent promise.

Case 2: The Stalking and Attempted Murder of Mayu Tomita (Japan, 2016)

Background: Mayu Tomita was a 20-year-old Japanese pop idol and singer. In early 2016, she began receiving obsessive messages online from a 27-year-old male fan, Tomohiro Iwazaki, whose romantic advances she had politely rejected. Tomita tried to disengage, even returning a gift he had sent her. Iwazaki's messages became threatening – he sent over **140 increasingly hostile tweets and comments**, including explicit death threats [46]. Tomita grew fearful and **reported these threats to the police** about two weeks before a scheduled concert of hers in Tokyo [47]. She provided police with Iwazaki's name, the content of threats, and details of her upcoming concert where she feared he might show up [48]. Tragically, the police deemed the threats "not an immediate danger" and did not take preventative action (such as warning Iwazaki or providing security) [49]. On May 21, 2016, as Tomita arrived at the small venue where she was to perform, Iwazaki was waiting outside. He confronted her and, in a frenzy, **stabbed her over 60 times** in the neck, chest, arms, and back with a knife [50]. Bystanders eventually intervened after she was gravely wounded – they subdued Iwazaki until police came. Tomita miraculously survived but with severe injuries, including partial blindness in one eye and lasting physical and psychological trauma [51]. Iwazaki was arrested at the scene and later sentenced to 14.5 years in prison [52]. Tomita later sued the Tokyo Metropolitan Police for negligence, arguing that her prior pleas for help were ignored [53] [54].

Presence Analysis: This case highlights the **limits of deterrence via presence when the offender is highly fixated and when authorities fail to act as guardians**. There were multiple points of presence that could have made a difference but didn't:

- **Online presence of threats:** The threats were very explicit (e.g., "I will kill you" type messages). Tomita did the right thing by making these threats visible to police – she essentially said "look, here is evidence, be present in this situation." However, the police failed to treat the online threats as serious, effectively dismissing the need for their presence. At the time, Japanese law did not clearly define cyberstalking as a basis for restraining orders (this case actually prompted legal changes to include SNS messages as stalking). Because Iwazaki's harassment was not "physical" yet, police assumed there was no immediate need to intervene [49]. This turned out to be a deadly miscalculation. If police had even **visited Iwazaki** or warned him that he was under watch, that might have deterred him. The absence of any **authoritative presence** in response to his threats perhaps emboldened him – he faced no consequences or even acknowledgment for his menacing behavior, which might have signaled to him that he could act with impunity. This is a general lesson: ignoring warning signs can remove the deterrents that an early show of presence (like a caution or surveillance) might establish. In Tomita's case, she essentially begged for a guardian presence and was denied.

- **Event security presence:** Tomita even gave police the date and location of her concert, implying "I fear he may come here" [48]. Yet no security measures were arranged. The venue itself apparently did not have significant security personnel (small-scale idol shows in Japan often don't). On the day, Tomita was accompanied by her music agent/manager, but the attacker struck so swiftly that the manager couldn't stop him in time. There were some people around (it was outside the venue on a street in a suburb of Tokyo). Bystanders ultimately did restrain Iwazaki, but not before the damage was done [55]. This underscores that **presence needs to be timely and prepared**. If a single security guard had been stationed to escort Tomita, the attack could likely have been prevented or mitigated. The police had even **the concert details** and still no one was assigned – a glaring absence of a capable guardian at the critical moment. By contrast, after this incident, Japanese authorities started responding more vigorously to celebrity stalking cases, often providing plainclothes police at events for those who have received threats.

- **Persistence of the attacker:** Iwazaki's mental state was such that normal social deterrents meant nothing to him. He attacked Tomita in broad daylight on a public street, yelling "You should die!" as he stabbed her repeatedly [55]. He did not care that others could see; indeed, witnesses were shocked at the brazenness. This is a prime example of an individual whose **ideation and emotion (rage at rejection) overrode any fear of consequence**. No anonymity was involved – he made no attempt to hide or flee. In fact, he waited to be arrested (some reports suggest he was oddly calm after being pulled off her, almost content that he had carried out his "mission"). For such an offender, the usual deterrent calculus – fear of being caught or judged – is virtually absent. This aligns with research on certain stalkers or "obsessive relational" attackers: they may be driven by a delusional narrative that eclipses self-preservation. **Presence fails as a deterrent here because the attacker wants to be seen (by the victim, perhaps by society) accomplishing what he sees as a justified act**. There is an element of performative vengeance; Iwazaki reportedly said in court he "didn't intend to kill" (despite the ferocity, he claimed he only wanted to cause injuries as punishment for rejecting him) [55] – a possibly self-serving statement, but it indicates he wasn't thinking rationally about outcome.

- **Public and Legacy presence:** The aftermath shows some role of presence in accountability. Tomita's case received significant media attention and public outcry in Japan over police negligence. In court statements, Tomita expressed that "not a day goes by that I don't think about the incident" and that she hoped her case would prevent future tragedies [54]. Her speaking out created a **legacy presence** that pressured authorities to change laws (stalking definition was expanded) [56]. In that sense, her suffering, unfortunately, had to become visible at a national level to catalyze reform. For Iwazaki, being publicly tried and imprisoned is a classic scenario of presence imposing justice after the fact – but notably, the prospect of that did not deter him beforehand.

Comparative Insight: The Tomita case is reminiscent of other stalking cases worldwide (for instance, the 1989 murder of actress Rebecca Schaeffer in the US, after which anti-stalking laws were strengthened). A common pattern is that **stalkers often display indifference to immediate social deterrents**. They frequently act in daylight, sometimes even in front of witnesses or security (knowing they will be caught, as their focus is solely on the target). This is why protective measures for stalking victims emphasize containment of the stalker (through restraining orders, arrests for any violation, surveillance) rather than relying on community presence to stop an attack in progress. In Tomita's scenario, only strong legal presence (police intervention early) could have helped, because on the day of, no normal bystander could have guessed the extent of the threat until it was happening.

The case did lead to a recognition in Japan that **"violence often starts with warnings"** that must be heeded. Statistics published after showed rising complaints of stalking and domestic violence in Japan – e.g., over 23,000 stalking reports in 2017, up from ~14,000 in 2011 [57] – which authorities attributed partly to more people coming forward due to increased awareness. This is positive in terms of presence: more victims seeking help means more chances to put protective presence (police, shelters) in place. But it also stresses law enforcement's responsibility: each report is essentially a request for "presence, please intervene." In Tomita's case, that call was functionally ignored, with dire results.

In conclusion, Mayu Tomita's near-fatal ordeal illustrates the **extreme end of presence limitation**. Traditional deterrents – fear of police, fear of bystanders, concern for consequences – failed against an irrationally obsessed attacker. The critical preventive presence (police action on credible threats) was absent. The case thus reinforces that presence as a shield is only as effective as the network of responsiveness behind it. It also demonstrates that when facing assailants who do not fear being seen, other strategies (incapacitation, psychological treatment, constant surveillance) are needed – a challenge since those typically only come into play after the individual commits a crime or at least overtly attempts

one. Tomita's survival and advocacy have given "presence" to stalking victims' plight in Japan, hopefully leading to more proactive guardianship in the future, so that warning signs are not dismissed as "invisible" or "not urgent" [54].

Case 3: The Christchurch Mosque Shootings (New Zealand, 2019)

Background: On March 15, 2019, a 28-year-old Australian man, Brenton Tarrant, carried out a terrorist attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. Tarrant was a white supremacist who had spent time on extremist internet forums. What makes this case especially relevant to our discussion is that he meticulously planned the **visibility of his atrocity**. Before the attack, he posted a racist manifesto online and set up a helmet-mounted camera to **live-stream the massacre on Facebook** [58]. He arrived at the Al Noor Mosque during Friday prayers and opened fire on worshippers, killing 51 people and injuring dozens. The first attack was live-streamed for about 17 minutes, broadcasting the horrifying first-person footage in real time on the internet [59]. Tarrant then drove to a second location (Linwood Islamic Centre) to continue his attack; by then police were en route and he was apprehended before he could kill more there. The livestream and manifesto spread rapidly across fringe sites – he explicitly intended for his violence to be **seen worldwide**, hoping to inspire others (at one point in the video he even implored viewers to "subscribe to PewDiePie", a bizarre meme reference, to maximize attention) [60]. Tarrant did not resist arrest; he wanted the infamy. In August 2020, he was convicted and given life in prison with no parole – the harshest sentence in NZ's history. The incident prompted global reflection on the role of online platforms in amplifying extremist visibility.

Presence Analysis: Christchurch is a paradigmatic case where presence was not a deterrent at all, but rather a goal of the perpetrator. In stark contrast to typical criminals who prefer not to be identified, Tarrant choreographed his attack for maximum audience. Let's break down the presence elements:

- **Perpetrator's desire for visibility:** Tarrant wanted to broadcast terror. He leveraged modern technology to be essentially omnipresent – anyone online could witness his acts in real time. This was the first successfully live-streamed mass shooting by a far-right terrorist [58]. He clearly was not deterred by the thought of being seen; indeed, being seen was the point. This flips the deterrence equation: normally, criminals fear cameras; Tarrant brought his own camera. For such an actor, the traditional presence of CCTV or eyewitnesses is meaningless. He expected to either die in a shootout or be arrested and made into a "martyr" for his cause. The presence he cared about was that of like-minded online spectators and the media – he knew the more shocking he made it, the more news presence it would get. In that sense, **presence became a weapon**: he used our mass communication networks (social media, news) to propagate fear and his ideology. This perverse use of visibility is something counter-terrorism experts now must consider: how to deny attackers the notoriety and audience they seek, without obscuring the truth of their crimes. New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern exemplified one approach by vowing never to speak the shooter's name publicly, to deny him the "fame" – essentially trying to curtail his legacy presence.

- **Absence of deterrent presence on the scene:** The mosques were typical "soft targets" – unguarded, open to the public for worship, with no security presence. New Zealand, a peaceful country, had extremely low murder rates and no recent history of mass shootings; the Muslim community there would not have expected an attack. Thus, there were no armed guards or police at the mosque (unlike, say, some synagogues or mosques in higher-risk countries which do have patrols). Tarrant was able to walk in with weapons freely. There was no immediate guardian to challenge him. By the time police were called, he had finished at the first site. He was encountered and arrested en route to the second, by regular officers who rammed his car – a response time of about 18 minutes from first emergency call, which is actually quite swift [58]. But even that swift

response wasn't fast enough to stop the initial slaughter. This demonstrates the tragic reality that even rapid law enforcement presence often only mitigates, not completely prevent, the damage in such scenarios.

- **Role of bystanders/victims:** Inside the mosque, some brave individuals did try to tackle or distract the shooter (one man wrestled with him, and some chased him off at the second mosque with a credit card machine as an improvised weapon). Their intervention likely saved some lives at Linwood. However, against a semi-automatic weapon and body armor, unarmed presence could only do so much. It's important to note that Tarrant's livestream perspective was that of essentially a videogame – he did not see his victims as human beings (in fact, the video's detachment was noted to perhaps desensitize some viewers). The presence of pleading, terrified people did not move him; he systematically executed even those crawling wounded. This is the **ultimate failure of Levinas's face-to-face ethic** – here is someone so ideologically blinded that the face of the Other did not register as an ethical command at all. If anything, their visible identity (Muslims at prayer) was precisely what he wanted to destroy. Thus, presence was inverted: the visibility of the victims made them targets in his hateful worldview.

- **Global presence and aftermath:** The attack was viewed live by a few hundred people and then rapidly reposted. Despite efforts by tech companies to remove the video, it proliferated on the internet in darker corners [61] [62]. Disturbingly, some extremists praised and memed it. However, the vast majority of global reaction was horror and solidarity with the victims. One could argue that the **unprecedented visibility** of this atrocity (clips of it did reach millions before full censorship) galvanized international will to crack down on extremist content. Within months, countries and tech firms launched the "Christchurch Call," an initiative to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online. In that sense, the over-visibility might have backfired on the attacker's movement by prompting greater monitoring (presence) in online platforms. New Zealand's gun laws were also swiftly tightened. So while presence utterly failed to deter the attack, the legacy presence of its imagery and story did produce responses aimed at preventing repeats.

Interestingly, this case makes security experts reconsider **deterrence strategies for ideologically driven shooters**. Traditional deterrence (harsh punishment, armed guards) doesn't work if the shooter expects or even wants death/capture and specifically chooses unprotected sites. One approach is **preventive presence through intelligence**: monitoring extremist forums (digital surveillance) to catch plans early. In Tarrant's case, he had posted on 8chan about his intentions shortly before, and a few online users actually saw it and tried to report it – but not in time. A robust intelligence presence in such communities might detect and thwart some plots (though at a civil-liberties cost). Another angle is **community vigilance**: e.g., awareness campaigns for the public to report suspicious behavior (Tarrant had been spotted taking photographs of the mosques in advance – a possible sign of hostile reconnaissance that went unreported). In New Zealand's small Muslim community, no one imagined someone surveilling their mosque to attack it. Now, unfortunately, many communities have learned to be more alert for that kind of presence.

This case is perhaps the clearest example in our discussion where **presence-as-deterrent hits a wall**. An assailant who craves infamy and has no exit plan cannot be stopped by making him visible – he made himself visible deliberately. The only "presence" that could have helped was a physical security presence at the site to shoot back (which is not foolproof and carries other risks), or a digital/police presence that intervened before he got to the doorstep.

In conclusion, the Christchurch massacre underscores that **deterrence via visibility is highly offender-dependent**. Against extremists courting the spotlight, different tactics are needed – such as reducing the

payoff of that spotlight (denying them the platform or glory). It also raises deep ethical questions about media's role: does broadcasting or widely reporting such events encourage copycats? New Zealand's approach was to strongly limit the spread of the video and focus on victims' stories instead of the gunman. Essentially, they tried to minimize the legacy presence of the perpetrator. This is a novel form of ethical visibility management – choosing who gets seen (victims, heroes, survivors) and who is intentionally kept out of sight (the killer) to reshape the moral outcome.

While Christchurch is an extreme case, it serves as a sobering capstone: presence is a powerful force for social control in most circumstances, but there are situations – particularly with **irrational or fanatical actors** – where it fails to shield the innocent. In the next section, we will build on these cases and theoretical insights to discuss an overarching framework of presence (Existence, Relation, Legacy) and the ethical architecture needed to maximize its benefits while addressing its shortcomings.

Ethical Architecture of Presence: Power, Responsibility, and the E-R-L Framework

In light of the discussions so far, we now step back to articulate a conceptual and ethical framework for understanding **presence as a form of power**. We propose that "presence" – in the context of deterring harm – is not monolithic; rather, it comprises three interrelated dimensions: **Existence, Relation, and Legacy**. Together, these form the **E-R-L framework** of presence. We will define each dimension, illustrate how it appeared in our cases or data, and then examine the ethical implications of relying on presence (in these forms) as a shield. This analysis engages with philosophical perspectives (like Nietzschean power dynamics and Levinasian ethics) to critically assess when presence empowers and when it might unintentionally oppress or fall short.

The E-R-L Framework Defined

- **Existence (Immediate Visible Being):** This refers to the straightforward, physical aspect of presence – the fact of someone or something being visibly there in the moment. Existence is presence in its most concrete form: a guard standing at a door, a camera observing an intersection, a neighbor watching from their porch, or even a potential victim standing confidently in a public space. The **power of Existence** lies in real-time deterrence. It forces an observer–observee relationship onto the scenario. In our analysis, this was the level at which bystanders, police patrols, street lighting, etc., operate. When Nietzsche spoke of herd morality and fear of being caught, it is the Existential presence of society's eye he alludes to – the here-and-now surveillance that keeps us in check [12]. Existence is also what failed at key moments in our cases: no guard outside Tomita's concert, no second officer with Couzens, no security at the mosque – these were absences of immediate presence that opened the door to violence. Ethically, Existence is the least complicated dimension: it is about **body and perception**. However, it can still raise issues – e.g., an overwhelming police presence might deter crime but can also intimidate innocent citizens if misused (raising concerns of profiling or over-policing). Existence asks: Who or what is visibly here, right now, and how does that shape behavior?

- **Relation (Social Connection and Recognition):** Presence is not just a physical fact; it is also about the relationship between observers and observed. Relation encompasses the **network of interpersonal visibility** – knowing and being known in a community, the sense of responsibility people feel for each other, and the collaborative aspect of surveillance (neighbors jointly watching out). This dimension appeared whenever we discussed **bystander intervention, community watch, or the face-to-face ethical bond**. For example, Levinas's notion that the face of the Other commands "Thou shalt not kill" is entirely about Relation [7]. It's not the mere existence of the

victim that deters, but the relational moment of recognizing their humanity. Relation also includes trust and legitimacy: Sarah Everard trusted Couzens due to a social relation (citizen to officer) that he cynically abused. When that relational trust erodes (post-Everard, women not trusting police in UK [45]), presence loses deterrent power because it's no longer seen as protective or authoritative. A security guard's presence deters only if people assume the guard will act; that is a relational expectation. **Relation is presence-as-connection** – it's the difference between a stranger watching and a neighbor watching. In deterrence, Relation is why a mother might say, "Don't do anything bad, what would the neighbors think?" The presence of known others carries normative weight. Ethically, Relation is double-edged. On one hand, it fosters **accountability and empathy** – as in a community where everyone knows each other, you are less likely to harm someone or commit a crime because you care about or fear the community's response (shame, loss of respect). This resonates with Nietzsche's observation that social judgment keeps many in line [13], but in a tight-knit communal sense it's not merely fear, it's also belonging and mutual concern. On the other hand, strong relational surveillance can become oppressive or exclusionary (e.g., small communities policing each other's behavior to the point of infringing individuality – a theme in some of Nietzsche's critique of herd morality). There is also the issue of bias: who is seen as "part of us" in a relation? Those outside a community may not benefit from its protective presence – indeed, they might be viewed with suspicion (e.g., racial biases in who is considered a "threatening outsider" under neighborhood watch). So, while Relation magnifies the deterrent power of presence through social bonds, it raises questions of **justice and inclusion**: ensuring that presence-based safety doesn't become discriminatory or a tool for enforcing conformity beyond reasonable norms.

- **Legacy (Enduring Visibility and Memory):** This dimension extends presence beyond the immediate moment into the future and the past. It is the idea that one's actions and identity will be **remembered, recorded, and responded to over time**. Legacy includes anything from a criminal record to media coverage to historical reputation. It's the form of presence invoked when we say "history will judge" or when someone refrains from wrongdoing thinking "I don't want this to be my legacy." In deterrence, Legacy is leveraged by things like the sex offender registry (criminals know if they're caught, their name stays public, dissuading some) or by cultural honor/shame concepts where your family name might be tarnished. We saw aspects of Legacy in how Christchurch's perpetrator sought a perverse legacy (manifesto, wanting to be named by media) and how NZ's leader tried to deny him that legacy, effectively an ethical stance to erase his presence over time. We also saw Legacy in Tomita's determination to take her case to court and speak out so the incident wouldn't be swept under the rug – she was ensuring that what happened to her would have a lasting presence in public discourse to prompt change [54]. Legacy presence is particularly salient in an age where digital footprints rarely fade; for example, the knowledge that a racist or violent outburst could live forever on the internet can deter people (the "Google shame" that "will my future employers see this?"). Ethically, Legacy raises issues around **punishment, privacy, and forgiveness**. A system that strongly emphasizes legacy (like permanent records, public offender lists) might deter some crimes, but at what cost to rehabilitation? Nietzsche might argue that an obsession with punitive memory (eternal punishment or infamy) reflects a vengeful morality that traps people in the past. There is also the balance of truth vs. dignity: the ethical principle of giving people second chances clashes with the deterrent effect of "one strike and you're infamous forever." In community ethics, some argue that restorative justice – which tries to reconcile rather than brand someone – can be a healthier approach than pure shaming. Yet, from a deterrence angle, the threat of lasting shame or record undeniably influences behavior. **Legacy presence also concerns the ethical use of surveillance data**: e.g., how long should camera footage be kept? Indefinitely (to possibly solve future crimes or deter by the idea of a permanent archive)? Or deleted to protect privacy?

Thus, the E-R-L framework shows that presence operates on immediate, interpersonal, and temporal planes. **Existence** is about now, **Relation** about us, **Legacy** about time. Effective deterrence often involves all three: e.g., a functioning justice system has police on the streets (Existence), trust between community and law enforcement (Relation), and courts/records that impose consequences (Legacy). If one fails, deterrence weakens. For instance, in Everard's case, police Existence was present (Couzens himself), but the Relation (trust and proper conduct) was utterly broken, and now the Legacy for the Met is tarnished credibility. In Tomita's case, Existence of police response was missing, Relation (her reaching out for help was ignored, a failure of duty of care), and Legacy is the aftermath changes in law – unfortunately built on her suffering. Christchurch had local Existence failures (no immediate security) and global Relation failures (the perpetrator felt no human kinship with victims), and now its Legacy includes an ongoing struggle to curb online extremist presence.

Nietzschean Power and the Ethics of Surveillance

Bringing Nietzsche back into the discussion: Nietzsche was deeply concerned with power dynamics and authenticity. If we interpret presence as a form of **power** – the power to deter and control behavior – then we must consider the morality of using that power. Nietzsche might ask: Does reliance on surveillance and observers make society more **cowardly** or herd-like, acting morally only from fear? He wrote that in societies of herd morality, **"Punishment itself is dreadful to them… with this question the morality of timidity draws its ultimate consequence."** [6]. This suggests that if we build an architecture where people behave only because someone might be watching, we have instilled a morality of fear, not a morality of strength or virtue. Nietzsche's concept of the **Übermensch** aspired to a being who creates their own values beyond herd approval. Such a person would presumably do the right thing (or at least their chosen thing) regardless of surveillance – a contrast to the average person who might cheat if unseen but behave if watched. From a Nietzschean standpoint, an ideal society wouldn't need omnipresent cameras, because individuals would have internalized higher values. However, Nietzsche also recognized reality: most people are greatly influenced by external opinion and pressure (what he might deride as slave morality).

The ethical challenge then is: **Does promoting presence as deterrence keep us at a low moral development stage?** If people refrain from sexual harassment only because of CCTV or #MeToo social media exposure, are they actually learning respect, or just fear? Some ethicists argue that while external deterrents are necessary, they should be paired with education and cultural change. For example, the hope with bystander intervention programs is not just to physically stop incidents, but to collectively assert new norms that eventually make the behavior unthinkable even without watchers. That is a more Nietzschean progression – moving from external enforcement to internal values. Similarly, consider children: one can supervise (present) a child constantly to ensure good behavior, but ideally one teaches the child to behave well even when alone. The architecture of presence, if overbearing, might stifle this internal growth.

Nietzsche's critique also touches on **power imbalances**: who watches whom. In a surveillance society, typically authorities watch citizens. Nietzsche saw modern institutional morality as often hypocritical – the powerful create norms to constrain the masses (herd morality) while often exempting themselves. This resonates with current issues: e.g., do government agencies subject themselves to the same transparency as they demand of citizens? Whose presence is closely monitored (often marginalized communities are more policed)? The **ethics of surveillance** demand fairness: presence as deterrence should not become a means of oppression or unequal control. Public cameras that deter crime also can be used to track political dissidents – clearly unethical if abused. The Panopticon we hailed for deterring wrongdoing is, in Foucault's analysis, a tool of domination. So we face a moral balancing act: how to use the power of presence to protect freedom from harm **without** infringing on freedom itself.

A practical ethical framework often invoked is **"proportionality and consent"**: surveillance and monitoring should be proportionate to the risk and ideally society should consent democratically to the trade-offs. For instance, a city might agree to CCTV in high-crime public spaces but not in private yards. Or individuals consent to body scanners at airports (a form of surveillance/presence for security) in exchange for safety, but they might not consent to pervasive scanning in all buildings. The ethical architecture of presence would emphasize **accountability** for the watchers (who monitors the monitors?) and **sunset clauses** or periodic reviews of whether certain measures are still needed.

The Responsibility Imposed by Presence

If we consider Levinas's perspective, presence is not just power, it is also **responsibility**. To truly see another person (to be present to them) is to become responsible for their well-being [17]. This is a beautiful ethical twist: deterrence usually frames watchers as enforcers (power over someone), but Levinas frames the watched (the face of the vulnerable) as having power over the watcher's conscience. This can underpin an **ethical architecture for bystander intervention**: we cultivate the idea that if you witness something, you must act – the very act of seeing calls you to duty. Campaigns like "If you see something, say something" in anti-terrorism, or sexual harassment posters that say "Don't be a bystander", all try to instill that ethic. This is presence as an active moral relationship rather than a passive deterrent force.

However, an ethical issue arises: can we demand everyone to take on this burden? The "Kitty Genovese" story (1964 NY case that led to research on bystander effect) often made people feel morally guilty for not intervening in violent situations. But not everyone has equal capacity to intervene (fear, safety concerns, etc.). There is an ethical line between encouraging communal responsibility and **victim-blaming or unrealistic expectations**. For example, telling women "stick together to deter attackers" is fine, but if something happens, one should not blame the friend for not preventing it – the blame lies on the perpetrator. Yet, ethically we do commend those who do step up as heroes, which implies a societal expectation (if mild) that presence should be used benevolently.

The concept of **"capable guardianship"** from criminology has an implicit ethical dimension: it assumes some members of society will take on the guardian role (security guards, vigilant neighbors). But what about the distribution of this duty? Often it falls unevenly—e.g., women and minorities might feel burdened to constantly alter their behavior to maintain "safe presence" (like always being watchful, avoiding isolation), effectively taking responsibility for not getting harmed, which can slip into victim-blaming logic ("she shouldn't have walked alone"; an unethical stance). A just ethical architecture would emphasize that everyone deserves safety and that potential offenders have the primary responsibility not to offend, presence or not. Deterrence measures are secondary safeguards, not obligations on victims.

Finally, regarding **Legacy and redemption**: ethically, how long should someone be marked by past visibility of wrongdoing? Nietzsche might say that a truly life-affirming ethic requires letting go of past guilt (he praised forgetfulness in a sense of moving beyond resentment [63]). Our current trend, however, especially with internet memory, is unforgiving. "Cancel culture" is essentially the Legacy dimension of presence in moral action—someone did something bad, social media ensures it will haunt them (sometimes proportionately, sometimes excessively). This arguably deters some bad public behaviors today, but it also raises questions: can people improve if society's eye never forgets their misstep? Ethically, a balance must be struck between **public safety/interest** (knowing if a person is dangerous or unrehabilitated) and **mercy/privacy** (allowing someone who has paid their debt to move on).

In a well-calibrated ethical architecture, **Existence** would be implemented with oversight (no unchecked surveillance or force), **Relation** would be fostered through community building and anti-prejudice (so

presence is protective for all, not just some), and **Legacy** would be handled with a view to justice and rehabilitation (records exist but are used fairly, and those who demonstrate reform can shed some stigma over time). Nietzsche's worry about herd morality could be addressed by combining presence with deeper moral education, so that over-reliance on surveillance can eventually relax as people internalize pro-social values. Levinas's call reminds that presence should never strip the humanity of those under watch – the watcher always bears ethical obligation to treat the watched as a person, not an object or "potential criminal" only.

Discussion

Bringing together all the threads – theoretical, empirical, ethical – we can now discuss the overall insights and practical recommendations emerging from this study. We have seen that the **deterrent power of presence** is real and significant: being seen (or believing one might be seen) does alter behavior in many contexts, generally for the better in terms of reducing harm. Yet, we have also catalogued crucial **limitations and caveats**:

1. **Type of Offender:** Presence deters the calculative or casual offender more than the determined, irrational, or ideological one. Our cases illustrated that spectrum. A pickpocket, a bully, or a would-be harasser often will back off if a watchful eye is apparent – the risk/reward ratio changes. But a terrorist like Tarrant or an obsessed stalker like Iwazaki may be undeterred or even perversely attracted to visibility. This suggests focusing presence-based prevention on the bulk of everyday situations (where it works), while devising specialized strategies (beyond mere surveillance) for the outliers (e.g., intelligence operations for terror, psychiatric treatment and containment for the dangerously fixated). In other words, **presence is necessary but not sufficient** for total security; other tools (intelligence, hard security, education, deradicalization) must complement it for the extreme cases.

2. **Quality of Presence:** Not all presence is equal. A trusted and competent presence is effective; a presence that is distrusted, negligent, or biased can fail or even exacerbate risk. This was evident with Couzens (a malignant presence) and with the police in Tomita's story (an apathetic absence when presence was needed). It underscores the importance of vetting guardians and training bystanders. A recommendation here is to **invest in the guardians themselves**: better police hiring/training to ensure those who are the "face of safety" truly uphold that role (to restore faith like in the Everard aftermath), and public campaigns to educate citizens on being good witnesses or helpers (improving the quality of relational presence). The motto "presence is a shield" only holds if the shield-bearers are reliable. Misplaced trust (as Everard had) can be deadly. Hence, mechanisms like independent oversight of police, community review boards, and clear avenues for reporting misconduct are part of maintaining the integrity of protective presence. Good **governance** is thus an integral part of an ethical presence architecture – watchers must be watched in some way, power must be checked.

3. **Balance and Privacy:** Our analysis acknowledges the Big Brother concern: too much surveillance can infringe on personal freedoms. Deterrence should not come at the cost of creating an atmosphere of paranoia or suppression. For example, an over-surveilled society might deter petty crime but also deter free speech or foster anxiety. The challenge is to find a **context-sensitive balance**. In high-crime areas, more CCTV and patrol presence might be justified (with community consent) until crime abates. In low-crime, high-trust societies, heavy surveillance may be unnecessary and unwelcome (New Zealand pre-2019 exemplified such a place; even post-Christchurch, they did not suddenly blanket the nation with cameras – they tackled gun laws and online hate rather than turning NZ into a security state). Another aspect of balance is

technological: using **targeted tech** (like geofenced surveillance for a limited time during a threat, rather than permanent blanket monitoring). Employing privacy-enhancing tech, such as cameras that blur faces by default and only reveal them if a crime is detected, is an emerging idea to allow "presence" without constant personal identification. The discussion should involve the public: what level of presence do people accept in trade for safety? These are inherently ethical and political decisions. The concept of **legitimacy** is key – people are more likely to support and cooperate with surveillance/presence if they feel it's legitimately purposed for safety and not abuse. Transparency in how data are used, clear limits (no, say, facial recognition to track people's political activities), and community control can improve perceived legitimacy.

4. **Psychological Adaptation:** An interesting discussion point is whether the deterrent effect of presence diminishes if people become too accustomed to being watched. Do people start tuning out cameras (like speeders who get used to where the traffic cams are)? Criminals adapt; we saw that with the Newcastle bike theft experiment – thieves simply moved to where the eyes weren't [24]. So presence strategies can lead to displacement, which is not solving crime, just relocating it. A comprehensive plan uses presence widely enough to make displacement impractical (if everywhere public is somewhat watched, displacement options shrink – but total coverage is dystopian). Alternatively, coupling presence with other measures (like community programs, offender rehabilitation) can reduce the overall motivation to offend, not just displace it. There is also a risk of "overload": if people feel constantly watched, they may either become overly stressed (bad outcome) or conversely desensitized and start to ignore watchers (diminished deterrence). The **optimal presence** might be intermittent or signaled at key moments – unpredictable enough that would-be offenders assume they could be seen, but not so pervasive that society feels like a prison. Foucault noted the Panopticon's genius was the uncertainty – you never know when the inspector is looking [10]. Modern analogues might be random patrol routes, or dummy cameras mixed with real ones. The aim is to create a climate where people assume an ethical responsibility largely because "someone could be watching" but eventually internalize it so that even if no one is watching, they uphold it.

5. **Empowerment vs. Dependence:** There's a subtle social discussion about whether emphasizing presence as shield could make people less self-reliant or situationally aware. If one trusts the cameras and guards to handle everything, do individuals become complacent about personal safety or communal mutual aid? This hasn't been extensively studied, but one might argue for an **integrated approach**: promote presence and personal preparedness. For instance, encourage people to be aware of surroundings (not to the point of fear, but prudence) even though cameras exist; encourage communities to build trust so people naturally watch out for each other, not solely rely on police. Presence should be seen not as an outside force alone, but as something **we all participate in** – a shared vigilance born out of care, not suspicion. That's where ethical education comes in: shifting from "I watch you to catch you" to "we watch over each other". That's an idealistic framing perhaps, but initiatives like neighborhood watch, when done in inclusive, non-vigilante ways, approximate that ethos.

To sum up the discussion: **"Being seen" indeed exerts a powerful influence on behavior, tapping into basic human psychology (we are social animals who respond to social evaluation and consequences).** This influence can be harnessed to protect the vulnerable and reduce violence, but it must be implemented with care for civil liberties and directed by ethical principles to avoid becoming repressive. The **conceptual lens** of Existence-Relation-Legacy helps clarify that presence works on multiple levels – any deterrence strategy should ideally address all three. For example, to combat workplace harassment: Existence (install visible reporting channels, bystander observers, maybe CCTV in public office areas), Relation (foster a culture where colleagues hold each other accountable and support victims – everyone feels seen and valued, not objectified), Legacy (clear penalties for harassers that affect

their career, plus publicized commitment by leadership so the legacy of the company is zero tolerance). That multi-level presence creates a robust shield: immediate prevention, social norm enforcement, and lasting consequences.

Our exploration reveals a sort of paradox: **the ultimate goal of using presence as a deterrent is to make itself unnecessary**. In a fully moral society, one wouldn't need cameras on every corner – people would "do the right thing even if no one's watching." Presence strategies should thus be accompanied by efforts to cultivate that internal morality. Until that ideal (if ever reachable), presence is a practical tool we cannot afford to ignore in safeguarding each other. The challenge is ensuring it is used justly – ever mindful that those we watch are persons whose dignity remains, and that those who watch (or manage the watching) are accountable to the very society they serve.

Conclusion

Conclusion: Being seen can indeed act as a non-violent shield against harm, but it is a shield we must wield with discernment. This comprehensive inquiry has shown that the **deterrent power of presence** is grounded in deep-seated psychological and social dynamics: from the watchful eyes that tap into our fear of punishment or desire for approval, to the empathetic human gaze that evokes our better angels. Presence, conceptualized through **Existence, Relation, and Legacy**, functions as a multifaceted force – one that, when ethically harnessed, reinforces safer environments and discourages malintent without resorting to coercion or violence.

We found substantial evidence across disciplines that support the maxim "visibility deters." Empirical data from labor and public safety contexts confirm that when potential wrongdoers know they are observed, many choose restraint. The ILO's global survey indicating **22.8% of workers have faced violence/harassment** also implicitly underscores that **most** workplaces – where supervision and policies exist – manage to keep such incidents the minority [36]. Initiatives as simple as posting **"we are watching"** eyes cut bicycle theft by **62%** in one experiment [23], and improved street lighting correlates with significant crime drops [34]. The new EU FRA survey revealed that while violence against women is widespread (one in three women in the EU suffer it [2]), the fact that only one in four incidents is reported [4] means much remains hidden – literally taking place out of the sight of authorities and society. Bringing those abuses into visibility – through awareness campaigns, encouraging reporting, and breaking taboos – is a crucial step in shielding victims and holding perpetrators accountable. UNICEF's sobering child violence stats (a child killed every 4 minutes [3], millions abused) further impress the importance of **shining a light** on domestic and hidden harms. Violence feeds on darkness; presence is the antithesis of darkness.

However, this study also cautions against any naive overreliance on presence alone. The case studies serve as stark reminders that **presence has limits**. In the Sarah Everard tragedy, the kind of presence (a predatory authority figure) perverted the notion of protection, and the absence of alert bystanders sealed the outcome [25]. In the Tomita case, neither the presence of prior threats (made visible to police) nor the eventual presence of random witnesses prevented the near-fatal outcome – a testament that presence must be accompanied by **responsiveness and competence** [48] [64]. And in Christchurch, presence was flipped on its head: the attacker exploited our interconnected presence (social media) to amplify evil, proving that presence can deter only those who wish to avoid consequences – not those who seek infamy at any cost [58]. These outliers teach us that while presence vastly improves safety in ordinary circumstances, extraordinary threats demand additional strategies.

Philosophically and ethically, we conclude that **the power to see must be married to the responsibility to care**. Surveillance and observation devoid of moral purpose can become instruments of oppression or

indifference. As we implement measures like CCTV networks, neighborhood patrols, or online monitoring, we must embed them in an "ethical architecture" that prioritizes human dignity, accountability, and proportionality. Nietzsche alerted us to the dangers of a morality of mere appearances – a society good only because someone's watching is not the highest good [12]. Thus, the goal should be to use presence as a **scaffolding** for a more genuine ethical order: one in which people initially deterred by external eyes eventually internalize the values of respect and empathy, such that even unseen, they uphold them. Levinas's insight – that the face of the Other issues an imperative – can guide us to emphasize the relational, humane aspect of presence. In practice, that means training police and guardians to see those they watch as persons to protect, not suspects to control; it means encouraging citizens to intervene out of solidarity, not out of surveillance-fueled fear.

Our framework of **Existence, Relation, Legacy** provides a useful checklist for policymakers and communities designing safety initiatives: - **Existence:** Are there adequate visible guardians (people or tools) in the spaces where harm is likely? If not, how can we introduce them (be it better lighting, cameras, patrols, or community volunteers) without excess or bias? - **Relation:** Is there trust and cooperation among those sharing the space? How do we strengthen social bonds so that presence is friendly and collaborative – a neighborhood watching out for one another – rather than a regime of suspicion? This could involve community dialogues, implicit bias training for watchers, and ensuring diversity and inclusion in guardian roles so every group feels seen and safe. - **Legacy:** What are the longer-term signals we send about consequences? Do our laws and institutions transparently and fairly address wrongdoing, creating a deterrent through predictable accountability? Are positive legacies (e.g., honoring upstanders, highlighting reductions in violence) being celebrated to reinforce that presence works and violence is not tolerated by society?

In closing, the deterring effect of being seen is one of those subtle social glues that hold civilization together. From the watchfires on ancient city walls to the modern "Neighbormood Watch" sticker, the principle remains: **we behave better when we know we're not alone**. By judiciously enlarging the sphere of presence – lighting dark corners, literally and figuratively – we can reduce the opportunities for cruelty and increase the chances for help. But we must do so in a way that respects personal freedom and promotes an ever-more conscious, caring society. A street lamp prevents a mugging not just by its photons, but by symbolizing that this place is cared for and observed. In the same way, a community that stands present against bullying or domestic violence sends a powerful message: we see you, and we will not look away.

Ultimately, the **deterrent power of presence** is inseparable from the **ethical power of community**. Being seen dissuades the would-be wrongdoer, and being seen suffering draws the aid of the righteous. A world where no one is invisible – where every person knows that if they scream, someone will hear; if they falter, someone will notice; if they misstep, someone will check them – is a world that has, by that very interconnectedness, less need for violence. It is a world more conscious of itself, achieving through watchfulness what heavy-handed force could not: a pervasive sense of mutual responsibility. In striving for such a world, we do not create a prison of surveillance; we create a **sanctuary of vigilance**, where the watchword is not "Big Brother is watching" but **"Each of us is our brother's keeper."**

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(Additional sources were referenced within footnotes throughout the text – e.g., press articles, SimplyPsychology summaries – to provide specific details and are cited in-line where used [69] [23], etc. The Bibliography above focuses on key works and reports directly pertinent to major points.)

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